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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *Auguſt* the 22d, 1754.

Tum violaria, et
Myrtus, et omnis copia narium,
Spargent olivetis odorem,
Fertilibus domino priori. HOR.

Mr. FITZ-ADAM,

WHEN I conſider how remarkably the ſeveral periods, in the riſe and declenſion of ancient ſtates, have been characterized by the varying manners of their people, I am apt to believe, that an enquiry into the importance of our preſent taſte for flowers, would be no very idle and unintereſting ſpeculation. But as I would not willingly foreſtall any abler pen, on a ſubject that deſerves to be conſidered by every patriot philoſopher of the age, I ſhall endeavour to confine

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my preſent animadverſions upon it within the narrow compaſs of my own private experience, and content my ſelf with giving a ſhort account of the motives which induced me to commence a floriſt at firſt, and of the advantages which I have ſince derived from the offices of my profeſſion.

It is obſervable, that the laws of decency and politeneſs are, for the moſt part, nothing but mere local inſtitutions, very much limited in their authority, and very arbitrary and fluctuating in their nature; and that no one who offers himſelf a candidate for fame in matters of taſte and faſhion, can ſucceed in his pretenſions at firſt, without accommodating them to the approbation of popular prejudice, or hold his reputation, after he has once procured it, on any ſafer tenure than the uncertain voice of the multitude. Now, I muſt own, I imagined (and perhaps many have been as much deceived in this point as myſelf) that the vegetable virtuoſo's credit was more particularly ſubject to this precarious dependence, and that the chief ſecurity of it's ſupport, conſiſted only in the accidental concurrence of numbers in an unaccountable and trifling purſuit. And it is very probable that I ſhould never have been convinced of the contrary, had I not been fortunately induced to purchaſe a ſmall collection of flowers, in order to eſcape the odious imputation of a taſteleſs ſingularity. But as many a commendable action has been undertaken at firſt on no better principle than the fear of ſhame, which has afterwards been proſecuted on a more generous motive; ſo was I brought at length to improve that collection in conſequence of my own thorough conviction of it's great importance, which was originally procured in compliance only with the fancies of other people.

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BEING rather of a contemplative turn, and not very apt to whiſtle away any of my vacant time, I was not long in diſcovering that the cultivation of flowers had in it a much finer mixture of the *utile dulci* than any other employment whatever. But before I attempt to ſhew in what particular reſpects it is moſtly ſuited to inſtruct and delight, I would willingly remove two very common objections, notwithſtanding, as their abſurdity is almoſt as evident as any thing belonging to them, they may be thought hardly worthy of my notice. Suppoſing then, that ſuch an inconſiderate and ſuperficial obſerver of things may poſſibly be met with, as ſhall reckon it any diſparagement to the intrinſic value of a flower, that it is expoſed to a great variety of accidents from the inclemency of the weather, and perpetually ſubject to the irregular dominion of the ſolar influence; it will be ſufficient to convince him of his miſtake, if he is not quite incapable of being convinced at all, only juſt to remind him of the uncertain condition of his own proſperity, and admoniſh him to reflect how little ſecure he is of being always preſerved from the oppreſſive ſtorms, or of enjoying the conſtant ſunſhine of fortune. And if that other objection, drawn from the ſuppoſed vanity of regarding any thing of ſuch a ſhort duration as the bloom of a flower, be admitted as concluſive, it muſt unavoidably prove a great deal too much; ſince it will not only hold with equal force againſt every temporal enjoyment, and all worldly ſatisfactions whatever; but (which I muſt confeſs is a very ſhocking conſideration to me) will utterly annihilate all thoſe engaging qualities of the fair ſex, which are moſt eſſentially neceſſary to recommend them to our love and admiration. Let me add moreover, that if there be that

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real ſimilitude, which the frequency of the alluſion ſeems to make unqueſtionable, between human life and a flower, it follows that no man can pretend to a right of deſpiſing the one, that would be thought to place any value on the other.

NOTHING ought to be reckoned good any farther than as it contributes to our happineſs. The value we put upon any poſſeſſion or employment, is the only ſtandard that can be properly applied to determine it's real worth. Whatever therefore is beſt fitted to adminiſter delight to any particular perſon, ought certainly to be regarded, by Him at leaſt, as the chief ingredient of that *ſummum bonum*, which, though it be the common end of all our endeavours, has however been purſued by as many different means as there have been different men. But ſuppoſing that no allowances were to be made in favour of ſingular propenſities; yet he that can enlarge the ſphere of his enjoyments, by contracting the extent of his poſſeſſions, ought, in all reaſonable conſtruction, to be deemed a much happier man, than he who under a fooliſh perſuaſion that he is ſecuring to himſelf an inexhauſtible fund of delight, ſhall take inceſſant pains to augment thoſe riches, and extend thoſe territories, which, after all, will as much diſqualify him for enjoyment, as an unweildy corpulency of perſon would incapacitate him for expedition. And one might eaſily produce many inſtances of men, who by a prudent converſion of ſuch incumbrances into flowers, have received more ſatisfaction from the products of a ſmall parterre, than from the income of a large eſtate; and found themſelves as compleatly happy as a Corycius, after they had once reduced their concerns to the eaſy management of a ſingle acre.

FOLLY

FOLLY may ſuggeſt what it pleaſe; but that alone ought to be eſteemed a trifle, which is of no conſequence; whereas there is nothing in nature unworthy of a wiſe man's regard, becauſe the moſt inferior of all her productions, may, in ſome light or another, be made inſtrumental to his improvement.

WERE we to reflect, in a proper manner, on the correlative importance of ſuch objects, as may be thought uſeleſs and inſignificant, when conſidered only with regard to themſelves, we ſhould diſcover a mediate ſort of union between the wideſt links of that indefinite chain which holds together the conſtituents of the univerſe: we ſhould perceive that all thoſe things, which are moſt diſſimilar in every other reſpect, do however agree in that common deſtination, whereby they become ſo many equally important parts of one ſtupendous whole: and we ſhould find as fit a place for the diſcovery of truth in every flower-garden, as in the celebrated groves of Cadmus.

IT has been from this ſchool that I have procured the beſt part of my philoſophy; and from this too have I learnt to improve and confirm my morals. The volume of nature is ſo full of paſſages above the explication of human learning, that the beſt proof of our having ſtudied it with uncommon diligence and ſucceſs, muſt conſiſt, chiefly, in our being able to produce from it many uncommon inſtances of our ignorance; and I have the vanity, or I ſhould rather ſay the modeſty to boaſt, that I have diſcovered difficulties enough in one ſingle leaf of it, to clear my underſtanding from the ſtupifying influence of a conceited ſufficiency, and to improve my reaſon into a perfect diffidence of it's utmoſt force and penetration. Nor have I a flower in my poſſeſſion that is

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leſs abounding in moral inſtruction, than in beauty and ſweetneſs. I cannot obſerve that induſtrious nicety with which the bee examines into every thing that comes in his way, without conſidering it as a reproachful admonition to myſelf: and if I do not collect ſome uſeful leſſon, that may ſupport me under all the enſuing revolutions of my life, from every flower that ſuch an inſect can extract proviſion from againſt the future exigencies of his; I am ready to place it to the account of my negligence, and to think myſelf guilty of the moſt unpardonable folly, in ſuffering Him alone to profit from that, which I aſſume the abſurd privilege of calling my own.

In ſhort, there is ſuch a cloſe affinity between a proper cultivation of a flower-garden and a right diſcipline of the mind, that it is almoſt impoſſible for any thoughtful perſon that has made any proficiency in the one, to avoid paying a due attention to the other. That induſtry and care which are ſo requiſite to cleanſe a garden from all ſorts of weeds, will naturally ſuggeſt to him how much more expedient it muſt be to exert the ſame diligence in eradicating all ſorts of prejudices, follies and vices from the mind, where they will be as ſure to prevail without a great deal of care and correction, as common weeds in a neglected piece of ground. And as it requires more pains to extirpate ſome weeds than others, according as they are more firmly fixt, more numerous, or more naturalized to the ſoil; ſo thoſe faults will be found the moſt difficult to be ſuppreſſed, which have been of the longeſt growth, and taken the deepeſt root; which are moſt predominant in number, and moſt congenial to the conſtitution.

Philanthos.

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